

# LAKE PARANOÁ IN BRASÍLIA/DF - BRAZIL: analysis of perceptions of visitors to the lake, motivated by leisure activities in the existing space

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## ABSTRACT

This study identified some recreational areas of the shores of Lake Paranoá in Brasília, seeking to analyse the perceptions of the population regarding the forms of use of these spaces. The leisure approach was used as the basis of the research, as well as the categories of analysis of geographical space. The perceptions of visitors to the shores of Lake Paranoá were obtained through interviews with the population found at the shores of the Lake, through the Collective Subject Discourse method of Lefèvre & Lefèvre. Based on these interviews, a collective discourse was drawn up that characterized the way the spaces on the edge of the Lake were seen and used by the visitors. The results of the survey showed that the area of the shores of Lake Paranoá has great potential for leisure use; however a lack of efficient occupation policies was identified, privileging public-private partnership.

**Keywords:** Lake Paranoá in Brasília/DF. Users. Leisure.

## INTRODUCTION

To understand leisure as the social relation is to think about social growth and development. The advantages that leisure provides for society are immense, considering the historic period we are in. With the technological advances and increased duties and responsibilities of man in the community, getting away from this context can bring a fresh perspective and the peace and tranquility to face these situations anew. This moment of escape from obligations is essential to improve people's quality of life. Leisure is capable of doing this.

However, the mere existence of recreational areas does not guarantee that they will be used. It is necessary to determine whether the existing areas satisfy their main objectives: individual and collective development, as well as social conviviality. The proposed study is related to the context of Leisure, Public Spaces and Social Development, as a space of analysis on the shores of Lake Paranoá in Brasília, Federal District.

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Considering the historical determinant of spatial occupation on the shores of Lake Paranoá, the objective of this research is to analyze the perception of regular visitors to the lake, motivated by leisure activities in the existing space.

The population of the city of Brasília needs recreational areas to promote development and social integration. Since the initial project of Lúcio Costa (Costa, 1991) for the construction of the Pilot Plan for Brasília, the shore of Lake Paranoá was planned for public use. According to the original plan, any occupations of the shoreline may only be for purposes that are in the public interest. This study contributes by demonstrating the perceptions of the local population concerning the uses and occupations of the lake shore.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Setting space: categories for analysis

It is considered the space is formed by nature's relations with man and his social relations. Everything that makes up the environment in which man dwells can be considered space. What gives life to these relationships is their interactions with social processes. Castells (1983, p. 182) says:

The space is a material product in relation to other elements materials – among others, men, who also enter determined social relations, which lend to the space (as well as to other elements of the combination) a form, a function, a social significance. Therefore, it is not purely an occasion of unfolding of the social structure, but the concrete expression of each historical setting in which a society is specified.

For Santos (1997, p. 49):

A basic concept is that the space is an objective reality, a social product in a constant process of transformation. The space imposes its own reality; therefore, society cannot operate outside of it. Consequently, to study the space, it is necessary to understand its relationship with society, as this is what dictates the understanding of the effects of the processes (time and change) and specifies the notions of form, function and structure; key elements for our understanding of the production of the space.

The relationship between the formation of the space of the shores of Lake Paranoá in Brasilia and society is directly connected. Thus, the understanding of the space should be based on an understanding of the social reality, based on the historical context in which the society has evolved up until the present time.

The function of Lake Paranoá, besides mitigating the dry climate of the region, is to promote the bucolic scale of the city, according to the initial project of Lúcio Costa. Thus, it is a space designed mainly for the leisure of the community. The function is directly connected to the form, and its current form presents evidence of this function, as there are various public and private areas of collective use that promote social encounters and leisure activities.

To understand the social space, it is essential to view form, function and structure, inserted in each time (process) as though it were a unique, bound concept. Each category has its own significant importance in the context, with none being more, or less important than the others, as it is only by understanding the four categories in an integrated and analyzed way that the formation of the space, and its uses by society, be understood.

Gomes (2002, p. 159) highlights the importance of public spaces for a society when he states that "[...] at the heart of the idea of freedom and equality, of a political regime that seeks to establish an isonomic value among people, there is an important and absolutely necessary spatial condition, the concept of a public space". The author (2002) finishes by saying that it is necessary to return to the idea of the public space as a place of active participation, a place for political discussions, and a place for debates, dialogue, and transformations in the social life.

For Gomes (2002, p. 162), "physically, the public space is, first and foremost, the place, square, street, shopping, beach, any kind of space, where there are no barriers to access and participation of any person". There is a development on the shore of Lake Paranoá that has the characteristics of shopping center, and other physical structures that can, at the same time, either motivate or inhibit the presence of people, considering their socioeconomic reality.

The objective of establishing a link and an identification between the community and the public spaces serves to prevent lack of care, and actions that go against the preservation of spaces. Therefore, affectivity with the public spaces establishes a certain feeling of preservation in society.

The maintenance of the shores of Lake Paranoá in Brasília as a place for social encounter is important for the community, manifesting a sense of collectivity that leads to a broad social development.

### Leisure: concepts and features

It is perceived that free time is, in some cases, greatly reduced, and this reflects directly on the availability of time that people have for leisure. In the sociological studies of Dumazedier (1999, p. 58), leisure does not only correspond to the basic needs of people. These needs interact with economic market conditions, with ethical traditions, and with existing policies, characterized by social determinism. However, freedom of choice within the leisure time is a reality, even if limited.

For Dumazedier (2001, p. 34):

Leisure is a set of occupations to which the individual can give himself willingly, whether to rest, to have fun, to enjoy recreation and to be entertained, or to deepen their information or disinterested formation, their voluntary social participation, or their free creative capacity, after freeing or untangling themselves from professional, family and social obligations.

Marcellino (2002, p. 14) states that "[...] besides rest and fun, another possibility occurs in leisure that is not usually as obvious; the personal and social development that leisure can bring [...] ". Dumazedier (2001, p. 32) agrees, stating that there are three most important functions of leisure: rest; fun, recreation and entertainment; and development. Andrade (2001, p. 21) complements this by stating that:

Leisure is essential to a balanced, healthy and productive human life. It is essential for the conservation and regular dynamism of the human ecosystem, whose ideal point of productivity is manifested in spontaneous activities and in planned attitudes of expansion and retraction, of tension and relaxation.

Thus, we see the importance of leisure for human psychological balance, in which the search for leisure brings beneficial and pleasant consequences for our organism. The effects of this mental balance are also seen in society, because the productive force (human being) maintains a personal and collective development.

According to Camargo (2003, p. 97) leisure is:

[...] a set of free, pleasurable, voluntary and liberating activities, centered on cultural, physical, manual intellectual, artistic, and associative interests, and performed during the free time, or historically praised from the professional and domestic working day, and that influence the personal and social development of individuals.

Leisure time, as a time of enjoyment, also becomes a time of learning, acquisition and integration that is different from the feelings, knowledge, models and cultural values, in the set of activities in which the individual is engaged. Leisure can become a break: a cessation of activities imposed by the professional, social and family obligations and, at the same time, a reexamining of routines, stereotypes and ready-made ideas ready that compete for the repetition and specialization of the day-to-day obligations (Dumazedier, 2001).

The shore of Lake Paranoá is considered a privileged space for social activities within the urban context of Brasília. Because of this, the leisure activities offered by the qualification and consolidation of the shore as a reference for the city should be linked to the construction and transformation of the space.

The sociability of the shore of Lake Paranoá, through the qualification of the infrastructure, is a process of valorization of the local space, because with the infrastructure, places become more accessible and, consequently, more visited by the population.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach of this work is qualitative research with bibliographical and survey techniques. The interview questions were formulated based on defined criteria, to identify the perceptions of the visitors to the shore in relation to the existing space for leisure.

The analysis method adopted was the Collective Subject Discourse (CSD) of Lefèvre & Lefèvre (2003). This technique consists of drawing up a Collective Subject Discourse (CSD)

using Key Expressions (KE), Central Ideas (CI) and Anchorages (AC) to describe the semantic field observed for the population interviewed. CSD causes the social or collective subject to be produced from the discourse and the corresponding speech, such that that the social speaks through the individual.

The questions formulated in the construction of CSD addressed questions regarding the reason for visiting the shore of Lake Paranoá, how they came to know about this leisure area, how they rated the access and signage to the leisure areas of the Lake, what they thought about the offer of public space on the shore, their knowledge about laws on land occupation around the lake, and their opinions in on privatization of shores of Lake Paranoá.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 people, at four different locations on the lake shore. The population delimited for the research covers the community of the Federal District that frequents the shores of Lake Paranoá in Brasília for leisure. The interview design was non-intentional, i.e. people were chosen at random to answer the questions.

Four open community leisure spaces were selected in different locations of the shores of Lake Paranoá. The level of infrastructure was also considered, ranging from locations with good infrastructure to locations with little or no infrastructure. The locations of the interviews were the Lago Norte recreational area, the Shopping Pier 21, the Pontão Sul and the Parque Ermida Dom Bosco. The interviews were carried out in May 2015, over a period of 24 days (Lago Norte leisure area and Shopping Pier 21) and 26 days (Pontão Sul leisure center and Ermida Dom Bosco park).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first CSD discovered the factors that led residents of Brasília to visit the shores of Lake Paranoá. Thus, it was possible to understand that society recognizes that there are few public spaces geared towards recreation in the city. People travel to the lake shore to enjoy a day out and take in the scenery, the climate of Brasília being another important factor for attracting people to areas near the lake. However, it was perceived in the interviews that not all members of society are interested in the areas around the lake, but visit only for work or out of necessity.

Another important aspect seen in the in the discourse was that the community believes the best leisure areas on the lake shore are the private clubs, but only a part of society has access to them because they are geared towards the middle class. A public space highlighted in the interviews was the Pontão Sul, as this was an area that was perceived as safe and comfortable. Therefore, the first CSD:

Brasília has few leisure options, and the shore of Lake Paranoá is a very good place for trips, fishing, enjoying the sunshine, and getting a tan. People come to enjoy the scenery, the diversity of the landscape, the fresh, pure air, the beauty of the lake and the breeze, all of that; the scenery here is beautiful, in short, it's a good place to enjoy the day. When there's nothing to do, I go to the lake shore to have fun, and spend the time. It's a good leisure area to talk, enjoy the bars, and have fun. I also come here in search of peace and calm that makes people feel calmer, to have spiritual peace, The pleasantness that the humidity of the lake provides brings a sense of well-being, because the climate of Brasília is very dry. It's good for the kids. On the shore, you can see the lake, the sky, so you feel you are in an open place. It's great to be in contact with nature, to be in contact with the aquatic part of the city. I used to come here more often, nowadays its sporadic, my son wanted to come here to have lunch, but I don't come here very often. I come to the lake shore because I work as a driver. However, the best leisure areas on the shoreline are the clubs [i.e. private resorts], and to go to the clubs you should have money. But the only public place on the shore that is safe and comfortable for people is Pontão, and that's the only place you can go to, that's why I only go to Pontão.

The relationship between the infrastructure and the use of the shore is directly linked, because Pontão Sul, which was mentioned in the visitors' discourse, has excellent infrastructure, with bars, restaurants and a lakeside walk, enabling people to spend longer in the place. There are spaces and motivations for the population to visit the lake, but the



infrastructure is concentrated in just a few places. The private clubs, also mentioned in the first discourse, were the most identified form of infrastructure and use of the shores of Lake Paranoá, but these restrict access to the lake to just a few people.

In the second CSD, the focus was on analyzing how the population came to find out about certain leisure areas on the shores of Lake Paranoá. The responses found to create the discourse of the society revealed that most of the population know about the leisure areas of the lake because they were born and raised in the city. Television and internet were also important means of publicity, and the fact that people use roads that run close to the leisure spaces of the lake.

With this discourse, it was possible to perceive the importance of mouth-to-mouth divulgation for the community to find out about the spaces of the lake. The discourse showed that the shore is known more for the fact that the people themselves divulge the leisure locations, and for certain artistic events that are promoted around the Lake. However, some people find out about these public spaces through research in books and atlases, which indicates people's interest in knowing more about the spaces on the shore of the lake, as indicated by the second CSD:

I've known about it for a long time because I've lived near here since I was a kid and always came here, my parents always brought me and I also know about it through Television, internet, passing by on the way from home to work and from work to home, walking around the city, going on trips in the car, and sometimes by boat I've seen these areas. People talk a lot about the lake, it's well-known around here, it's passed by word of mouth from one person to another, my nephews and nieces visit the space. Friends comment, there are shows, cultural events, everyone knows about it and has heard of it. People came here and I decided to come too. I didn't come to know about this place through publicity, there was no specific means of communication, I knew these areas through books and Atlases.

Means of publicity are important for people to find out about the leisure locations of the lake shore; However, most visitors to Lake Paranoá know about the public areas through the fact that they live in the city and affirm the importance of word-of-mouth in Brasília. However, there is a need for more publicity in the region, not only for visitors to the city to

learn about these places, but also because publicity can generate an incentive to introduce infrastructure to the place.

An important factor for promoting the shore of Lake Paranoá is access to these spaces. Therefore, the third CSD sought to analyze the perceptions of the users in relation to access to leisure areas. The CSD indicated that access roads are only adequate in some parts of the shore, especially in the southern part of the lake, where there are more leisure spaces. The JK bridge was indicated as a great advance in the development of access roads around the lake, as well as the other bridges that exist around the lake. In the understanding of visitors, the roads are paved, and in some cases, access to certain leisure areas is along unpaved roads, but even so, they consider these roads appropriate to reach the desired location. One complaint that deserves to be highlighted is the lack of public transport for the population to travel to the leisure areas of the lake, since public transport can determine whether the public will visit Lake Paranoá. Thus, the third CSD is presented as follows:

It depends, in some places the access routes are adequate and in others they are not. With the JK bridge it has improved a lot, now the access routes go around the lake, and there are still the other bridges that meet the needs of those visiting the leisure areas very well. The roads are asphalted and the road is unpaved in some places, but both are adequate. You can come, and leave the car securely. But in the northern part of the lake, the access roads are inadequate, there is a lack of desire on the part of the government to improve the roads. There are not many ways to get to the lake, and it's not always adequate. If I didn't have a car, it would be even more difficult to get to these areas, as the public transport is complicated and insufficient.

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The area around Lake Paranoá has a good access infrastructure concentrated in the most popular areas and those with most investment, such as the private clubs and Pontão Sul. The preservation of the lake shore consists of the way in which infrastructure is introduced, so some access roads to the leisure areas of the shore are still quite rudimentary, such as unpaved roads, to decrease the impact on the local ecosystem.

For the fourth CSD the interest was in finding out how population views the signposting to the leisure areas around the lake. The discourse showed that the residents of the city do not notice the signposting, and do not need them as they already know the area. But the

same discourse showed that those who do not know the area have difficulty finding the leisure areas, as there is a lack of signposting, and those that do exist are not very clear. Although the discourse focused on reporting the insufficiency of the signposting at the lake shore, it revealed that in the understanding of the population, the best-known places have good signposting, particularly when some event is taking place. Thus, the CDS was as follows:

Those who live in Brasília are used to the city, so they don't notice the signposting, and because they know the city, they can find the leisure areas of the shore easily; they don't need signposting. But for those who don't live in Brasília, they don't understand the addresses because here, it's different from the rest of the country. For those who don't know the leisure areas, it's difficult to get there, you have to go and ask, therefore there could be more signposting, they are inadequate, there's no indication. Most people enter via alternative places because they don't know how to get to the leisure areas, and the signposting that exists is not very clear. However, in the better-known places the signposting is great, adequate, all the roads have signs indicating the areas, those who want to can get there easily. When there is a party or some event, it's all clearly signposted. At the moment the signposting is much better and for Pontão and Ermida, it's adequate.

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Only the better-known and popular public spaces of the shores of Lake Paranoá have signposting; the other areas have none. The Government of the Federal District should introduce a series of signs to the lake shore, to show the public leisure areas and promote the integration of the population for the public areas, as with proper signposting, the flow of people to the leisure areas of the shore could increase.

In relation to the fifth question, the discourse revealed what the population understands as a public space on the lake shore, and whether it is satisfied with what is offered. The significance of this discourse is that it presents the point of view of the population concerning the reality of the shore of Lake Paranoá in Brasília. Thus, the discourse given by the visitors showed that the shore could be better used, and that it requires more diversity for its space, with various locations being unused and abandoned.

Only a few places on the shores of Lake Paranoá have proper infrastructure, which is very little compared to the size of the space. The discourse highlighted that the clubs meet the needs of social integration, but they cater only for a small public, creating social segregation for those who cannot afford to join a private club. The fifth discourse was as follows:

Although there is a cinema, clubs, restaurants and ice cream parlors that meet the day-to-day needs, what is offered in the shore space is insufficient; there could be more leisure options, change some things, a lack of diversity, there are several places that are not being used, they are abandoned. The shore is under-exploited, they could put in infrastructure geared more towards the public, here there is no demand, because there are no attractions. Brasília is extremely lacking in places for social integration. When there's a bank holiday, the satellite cities move to Brasília, the shore doesn't have enough space for everyone, because few of the shore areas are used. The initial project was to have a walkway alongside the entire lake, but there isn't one, and there are illegal land occupations on the edge of the lake that make access difficult and hinder the use of public spaces. There's a lack of toilets, a lack of kiosks, a lack of everything, it does not have adequate infrastructure. This space could be better taken advantage of due to the size of the lake. Here, it only meets the need of the people who live nearby, particularly in the southern part of the lake, and all those who live in the southern part can afford to join a club. The shore is unique and exclusive for those with spending power. Those without money do not have access to good places on the shore, which is the clubs. Either you join a club or you don't visit good places on the lake shore. The use of the shore is restricted who those have money.

With this enormous area around Lake Paranoá, much better use could be made of it; however, the public leisure spaces are concentrated in some points of the shore, influenced by the construction of private dwellings, which goes against the community use of the shore. Private clubs are recognized as the best way to use the shore. This fact seems to reverse the logic of public spaces, because the occupation of the area around the lake cannot be restricted to clubs, as there is a need for open public areas on the shore for people who cannot afford to these leisure facilities.

The perception sought in the sixth question related to knowledge of the public about the laws governing the occupation of the surroundings of Lake Paranoá. Thus, the discourse of the population was that they do not know about the form of the laws, they only heard about

it, and knew that there is a law on preservation of the original vegetation that prevents construction on the lake shore.

Although the community is aware of the laws, they affirm that there is a lot of invasion of public areas around the Lake, which prevents the population from accessing these areas. The discourse revealed that the population believes that the invaders of the lake shore are wealthy people, which makes expropriation of these areas by the government difficult. The sixth CSD was follows:

I know from hearing about, I know that it exists. There is the 30-meter law which states that you cannot build on the shore of the lake, in which you have to preserve the original vegetation, there are environmental laws. There is also has the district and federal law, I don't know all of them specifically, but I know that they exist, I've heard about them through television but I can't think of it exactly. I know that there is a lot of invasion in the public areas of the lake shore where they have invaded the green area. The shores of Lake Paranoá in Brasília were meant to have a much more open green area, but the houses near the lake have invaded this green area. The population could have much more access, but they don't because of this. The invasions are by judges, public prosecutors, people in high government positions, people with money, they invade it even though they know the laws. There have been various stores in the newspapers showing this invasion.

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The laws exist, but the community doesn't have full knowledge of them or whether they are being complied with. Another fact that prevents the enforcement of the law on occupation around Lake Paranoá is the fact that the irregular occupations are by people with lots money, so it's difficult for the government to bring down these buildings.

To conclude the understanding of the population that visits the lake shore, people were asked about privatization of this shoreline. Thus, the seventh CSD showed that there are people in favor of privatization, as long as it is for the collective well-being and preservation of the place, with the implementation of infrastructure geared towards the public and not private residences. The discourse also revealed the visitors' understanding concerning the neglect of the local government when it comes to preserving the surroundings of Lake Paranoá, with no investments being made in the place. The seventh CSD was follows:

In some cases, I am in favor and in others, against, because there are a lot of houses, which pollute too much and destroy the whole shoreline of the lake. There's one house that is practically in the lake itself, I think that's wrong. I am against the privatization of residence. I think it's wrong because there is a law to preserve the whole shore, and it belongs to the whole population. The government should take stronger measures, but it has no control over this, it's very disorganized and provides access for people to surround their homes right to the shore of the lake. The government is not concerned with the poor, as it's a public area, and privatization only favors the rich. Nobody has to take possession of a green area that belongs to the Country, it's public. Brasília is listed as a historical heritage of the Union and a public area cannot be privatized. The lake shore exists for society, to serve the public. The privatization of public assets in Brasília is a scandal. I don't think privatization it's good because it will destroy the shore. If you don't take care of the shore, you'll have problems with preservation. It could be left as it is, where everyone can enjoy the shore. If you privatize the shore you will make the space for the elite only. However, privatization that brings a return of well-being for the population while keep the environment as it is, privatizing for leisure, I support, because the government does not invest in this.

The privatization of the shores of Lake Paranoá should not be in private form, but should be in line with its proposed use, which is to provide leisure for the whole community. Therefore, it is important to introduce infrastructure on the shore, but as the government cannot afford these constructs, the solution is to create a partnership with private agents to finance the projects.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

With the analysis of the seven questions applied to visitors of the shore of Lake Paranoá in Brasília, it was possible to understand that the space around the Lake is little explored in relation to its potential, and that the population considers these public spaces to be important, although the areas do not have adequate infrastructure to receive the population comfortably. The space of relationship between the physical environment and the population reveals the importance of the shore for the local population, and the relationships of the population with the environment.

The purpose of the interview was to understand the importance of Paranoá Lake for the local population, and the results found in the discourses presented showed that this space has great potential of becoming a major center of leisure in the city, since even with inadequate infrastructure to receive the public, the lake attracts significant numbers, and offers a range of options for leisure and social gatherings.

The visitors understood that the spaces are insufficient; leisure areas do exist, but these are for the more privileged classes of the population, such as the private clubs. They believe that the lake shore has been abandoned by the local government, and there is a lack of investments to adapt to the use of the existing public spaces. This group also criticizes the irregular occupations that prevent the population from having access to the lake, and they are certainly correct, as there is a law on occupation of the surroundings of Lake Paranoá that prohibits any construction within a 30-meter zone from the edge of the lake. In his development plan, Lucio Costa, the urban planner responsible for the architectural design of Brasília, stipulated free access for all, around the body of water.

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Despite the fascination that Lake Paranoá holds for visitors, there is clear dissatisfaction of the population with the public agents when it comes to investments in infrastructure, as it is believed that the space is badly utilized, and that the local government should invest more in the quality of life of the residents of Brasília.

The existence of two groups was also perceived, characterized by income, in the form of use of this space. The first group can be defined as social class "A", which visits the places with the best facilities and better conditions of use, and the second group consists of the less well-off, who visit less well-structured facilities, mainly for fishing.

The study identified the neglect of the lake shore, and found that there is room for investment in its development. There is political interest in making adequate use of the shore, and creating partnerships with the private sector, providing benefits for investors

that will increase their confidence and interest, as the returns will be beneficial for all those involved.

This study was part of the research conducted for the Master's degree thesis in Tourism and Hospitality of Junqueira (2006), and contributes to research on the leisure relations explored on the shore of Lake Paranoá in Brasília. It may also serve as the basis of various studies related to leisure, public urban spaces, whether in Brasília and the surrounding region or in other places. The research was limited by the difficulties encountered in obtaining information from the public sector in terms of documents and analyses of the actual situation of the space explored.

It is suggested that further studies be conducted based on a mapping of the shoreline of the lake, identifying and characterizing the new leisure structures introduced by the government in partnership with the private sector in recent years. New approaches are also recommended, to identify the various perceptions of the social groups of the local population. To accomplish this, the method of the Collective Subject Discourse can contribute to the understanding of the interpretation of the public spaces of leisure for the community that uses it for leisure.

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